

## Restoration Begins at Bluefish River Fire House

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

Since town meeting approved to allocate Community Preservation Act funds for the restoration of the Bluefish River Fire House in March 2005, Nancy Bennett has been working diligently to raise the rest of the monies needed to bring Duxbury's first fire station back to life. Over the last few weeks, Bennett of the Friends of the Bluefish River Fire House has watched as new windows, a roof and shingles have spruced up the 100-year-old structure on Washington Street.

"This project is very special. We've had community support from companies and from residents. I have even gotten letters from people making donations in memory of or honoring someone connected to the fire house," Bennett, who also doubles as the historical commission's representative to CPC, said.



David Cazeault of Elm Hill Lane had his company Cazeault Roofers remove, dispose of and erect a new roof on the 100-year-old fire house. The new windows were bought at a discounted rate thanks to John Baldwin of High Street who also drove to Maine to retrieve the windows to eliminate the shipping fee.

The Friends formed in February in an attempt to raise funds to restore the historic building. Bennett said \$15,000 has been raised thus far. Town meeting allocated \$9,800 of CPA funds for purchasing building materials. Business owners like David Cazeault of Elm Hill Lane, who owns Cazeault Roofers, and builder John Baldwin of High Street, who owns the John Baldwin Company, have been instrumental to the project's success according to Bennett.

"David Cazeault donated the roof. He took the old roof off, got rid of the shingles and put the new roof on," Bennett said. "John Baldwin offered his company's services and he has also helped me coordinate this entire project. He located the windows for us from a company in Maine and he was able to get the windows for a discounted price. Then he drove up to Maine to pick up the windows to save up from paying the shipping fee."

Baldwin's crew replaced shingles on the building. Bennett said those shingles were also purchased for a reduced rate. Susan Curtis of High Street designed and donated the red sign that had been posted on the right side of the building before work on the shingles began.

Emmett Sheehan of Powder Point Avenue and Eagle's Nest Tree & Landscape is assisting with drainage, air circulation and landscaping of the old fire house. Bennett said the company has dug trenches alongside the structure for drainage due to the building's lack of gutters or down spouts. Vertical skirts will allow air to circulate throughout the facility. Sheehan will donate nautical looking lights to be erect-

ed to illuminate the outside of the building. An additional maple tree will also be planted at the site. The rest of the work includes installing the building's garage and side doors as well as painting the building and trim.

"Depending on how things go, I may need to ask around for another painting company to help us for about two days," Bennett said. "I think we are still going to need between \$3-4,000."

CPC member and Friend of the Bluefish River Fire House Tony Kelso is researching the deed for the fire house to ensure the building can be historically protected according to Bennett.

"We were worried that if we didn't restore the fire house it might be torn down someday," Bennett said. "I don't think the town would ever allow it to be torn down, but you never know."

The building, constructed in 1906, is owned by the town. Originally built on the parcel of land that the Wright Building now sits on, the Wright family had the fire house moved to its current location on Washington Street in order to build a library on the property in 1908. The fire house was home to Engine Company One. It housed a pumper. Bennett said across the street from the fire house, a barn held horses that would pull the pumper to the fire.

Bennett said the facility was used as a fire house until the late 1960s. After closing its doors, the structure housed an antique apparatus for nearly 20 years. That equipment was later moved and the old fire house has since become a storage facility for the harbor-master.

The restoration project is endorsed by the fire department. The building's 100th birthday also marks the 100th anniversary of the Duxbury Fire Department. Fire Chief

Kevin Nord hopes the restoration will be finished in enough time for the department's birthday celebration.

"The Bluefish River Fire House is a snapshot of history," Nord said. "It was a very social place because the department depended on volunteerism."

Nord added that while town records show the town meeting voted to establish an official fire department in 1906, but other documents reveal receipts dating back to before 1906 for the purchase of fire equipment.

Bennett said retiring Deputy Chief John Bowser, who is also a woodworker, will make the sign for the fire house. The sign will read "Engine Co. 1," but will not make any reference to being a fire station, so that visitors to town or new and seasonal residents don't confuse the restored structure with an actual manned fire station. The restoration project has also allowed Bennett to connect with descendants of those involved with the fire house's rich past.

"We've gotten donations from a man whose father drove the fire truck and from a man who drove the fire truck himself when the station was operational," Bennett said. "Stan Merry said his father, Hortense Merry, was one of the station's first fire chiefs. Stan remembers as a child riding in the back of the truck with his father and cranking the siren. He said back then fire chiefs weren't called chiefs, but rather fire engineers."

Anyone interested in donating to the Friends of the Bluefish River Fire House can send donations to P.O. Box 1180, Duxbury, MA 02331. Bennett said anyone who provides funding, supplies or labor will be listed in a commemorative book.